



Republic of the Philippines
Department of Education
NEGROS ISLAND REGION (NIR)

REGIONAL MEMORANDUM

No. 876 s. 2026

AUG 19 2026

**DISSEMINATION OF ADVISORY ON THE CONDUCT OF CLUSTERED
FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS (FGDs) FOR THE BASELINE STUDY
ON LEARNER AND PARENT DECISION-MAKING IN CONGESTED
PUBLIC SCHOOLS (VISAYAS CLUSTER)**

TO: Assistant Regional Director
Schools Division Superintendent of Dumaguete City
All Others Concerned

1. This Office hereby disseminates the attached copy of the DepEd Central Office Advisory dated August 17, 2026, pursuant to MEMO-OUF-2026-1768 dated July 28, 2026, regarding the Administrative and Logistical Arrangements on the Conduct of Clustered Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) for the Baseline Study on Learner and Parent Decision-Making in Congested Public Schools (Visayas Cluster) to be hosted by the Schools Division Office (SDO) of Dumaguete City on August 24-27, 2026.
2. For further inquiries and coordination, contact Mr. Riene R. Dimakiling, Project Development Officer II, GASS-PRDD, at gass.prdd@deped.gov.ph or through mobile/Viber at 0960-672-3086.
3. Immediate dissemination of and compliance with this Memorandum are desired.

RAMIR B. UYTICO EdD, CESO III
Regional Director

Encl.: As stated

References: DepEd Central Office Advisory dated August 17, 2026
MEMO-OUF-2026-1768 dated July 28, 2026

To be indicated in the Perpetual Index under the following subjects:

PRIVATE EDUCATION PROGRAMS PROJECTS RESEARCH SUBSIDIES GASTPE

NIR/QAD/Memo/ggc / August 18, 2026



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Republic of the Philippines
Department of Education
OFFICE OF THE UNDERSECRETARY FOR FINANCE

MEMO-OUF-2026-1769

July 28, 2026

TO : CARLITO D. ROCAFORT, CESO III
Regional Director, Region IV-A

RAMIR B. UYTICO, CESO III
Regional Director, Negros Island Region

MARIA INES C. ASUNCION, CESO III
Regional Director, Region XI

EDMARK IAN L. CABIO, CESO VI
Schools Division Superintendent, Dumaguete City

REYNANTE A. SOLITARIO, CESO V
Schools Division Superintendent, Davao City

DORIS DJ. ESTALILLA, CESO V
Schools Division Superintendent, Rizal

ALL OTHERS CONCERNED

FROM : ATTY. EDSON BYRON K. SY
Undersecretary for Finance

**SUBJECT : CONDUCT OF CLUSTERED FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS (FGDs)
FOR THE BASELINE STUDY ON LEARNER AND PARENT DECISION-
MAKING IN CONGESTED PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

In support of evidence-based policy and program development, the Department of Education (DepEd), through the Government Assistance and Subsidies Service (GASS), in partnership with the Student First Coalition (SFC), shall conduct clustered focus group discussions (FGDs) for the Baseline Study on Learner and Parent Decision-Making in Congested Public Schools.

The FGDs will gather in-depth evidence on the factors influencing parents' participation or non-participation in the Educational Service Contracting (ESC) Program and the Senior High School Voucher Program (SHS VP). They will also obtain the perspectives of participating private schools and congested public schools on school choice, learner transition, program implementation, coordination, and public-school decongestion.

Fieldwork will be conducted in the Schools Division Offices (SDOs) of Rizal, Dumaguete City, and Davao City on the schedules provided in Annex 1. In this regard, the assistance of the concerned Regional Offices (ROs), SDOs, host schools, and participating public and private schools is requested as follows:



For the ROs through the designated focal persons:

- a. Designate one (1) focal person who will serve as the primary regional coordinator for the activity and submit the required contact details through Annex 2 or the live coordination sheet.
- b. Coordinate with the concerned SDOs and monitor the progress of host-school confirmation, participant mapping, and fieldwork preparations.
- c. Facilitate the dissemination of this Memorandum and related documents to the concerned offices and schools.
- d. Attend the scheduled coordination meetings and provide the necessary regional support during fieldwork.

For the SDOs through the designated focal persons:

- a. Designate one (1) focal person who will serve as the primary division coordinator and submit the required contact details through Annex 2 or the live coordination sheet.
- b. Confirm the designated host school and coordinate the required venue and onsite arrangements.
- c. Identify and validate participating public and private schools and qualified respondents based on the criteria in Annex 3.
- d. Coordinate closely with participating schools to meet the required number of respondents and prescribed selection criteria.
- e. Facilitate the distribution and collection of invitation letters, activity briefers, and informed-consent forms.
- f. Coordinate local arrangements and facilitate participant attendance during the scheduled FGDs.

For the host schools:

- a. Provide at least two (2) functional and sufficiently private rooms for the simultaneous conduct of the FGDs.
- b. Prepare the registration area, tables, chairs, electrical outlets, and other basic venue requirements.
- c. Assist in onsite coordination, participant assembly, and other logistical arrangements.

For the participating public and private schools:

- a. Nominate and verify qualified respondents and submit the required information to the SDO.
- b. Distribute appropriate invitation letters, activity briefers, and informed-consent forms.
- c. Coordinate directly with parent-respondents and make the necessary internal arrangements for their travel to and from the host school.
- d. Provide relevant school information and comply with applicable ethical and data privacy requirements.

The concerned ROs and SDOs shall submit the names and contact details of their designated focal persons immediately upon receipt of this Memorandum and before the Initial Coordination Meeting. The required template and live coordination sheet are provided in Annex 2.

To discuss the study protocol, respondent requirements, fieldwork arrangements, and respective responsibilities, the designated focal persons are requested to attend the following online coordination meetings:

Meeting	Schedule	Participants
Pre-FGD Coordination Meeting for the Luzon Cluster	August 7, 2026 (Friday), 1:00-3:00 PM, subject to confirmation	GASS, SFC, Region IV-A, SDO Rizal, host school, and concerned participating schools

For further coordination or clarification, **Mr. Riene R. Dimakiling**, Project Development Officer II of the GASS-Policy Review and Development Division, may be contacted through gass.prdd@deped.gov.ph or 0960-672-3086.

For consideration and appropriate action. Thank you.

ANNEX 1. CLUSTER SCHEDULE AND INDICATIVE PROGRAM OF ACTIVITIES

The schedule and program below are indicative and may be adjusted based on confirmed travel arrangements, local conditions, and participant availability.

Cluster	Fieldwork Schedule	Schools Division Office	Host School
Visayas	August 24-27, 2026	Dumaguete City	To be determined
Mindanao	September 1-4, 2026	Davao City	To be determined
Luzon	September 15-17, 2026	Rizal	To be determined

A. Visayas Cluster - SDO Dumaguete City

Day	Indicative Activities
Day 1	• Travel from the National Capital Region to Dumaguete City; • Courtesy call and initial briefing with the Negros Island Region, SDO Dumaguete City, and the host school; and • Venue inspection and confirmation of arrangements.
Day 2	• Registration and preliminaries; • Parallel FGDs for Group A and Group C; • Facilitator and documenter debriefing; and • Initial consolidation of notes.
Day 3	• Registration and preliminaries; • Parallel FGDs for Group B and Group D; • Debriefing with the RO and SDO; and • Confirmation of remaining documentation.
Day 4	• Debriefing and initial consolidation by the GASS and SFC teams. • Travel back to the National Capital Region; and

B. Mindanao Cluster - SDO Davao City

Day	Indicative Activities
Day 1	• Travel from the National Capital Region to Davao City; • Courtesy call and initial briefing with Region XI, SDO Davao City, and the host school; and • Venue inspection and confirmation of arrangements.
Day 2	• Registration and preliminaries; • Parallel FGDs for Group A and Group C; • Facilitator and documenter debriefing; and • Initial consolidation of notes.
Day 3	• Registration and preliminaries; • Parallel FGDs for Group B and Group D; • Debriefing with the RO and SDO; and • Confirmation of remaining documentation.
Day 4	• Debriefing and initial consolidation by the GASS and SFC teams. • Travel back to the National Capital Region;

C. Luzon Cluster - SDO Rizal

Day	Indicative Activities
Day 1	• Travel to Rizal; • Courtesy call and initial briefing with Region IV-A, SDO Rizal, and the host school; venue inspection; and • Confirmation of respondents and onsite arrangements.
Day 2	• Registration and preliminaries; • Parallel FGDs for Group A and Group B; • Facilitator and documenter debriefing; and • Initial consolidation of notes.
Day 3	• Registration and preliminaries; • Parallel FGDs for Group C and Group D; • Debriefing with the RO and SDO; and • Travel out and return to the point of origin.

Note: Parallel FGDs refer to separate sessions conducted at the same time for different respondent groups, using separate rooms, facilitators, and documenters.

ANNEX 2. RO AND SDO FOCAL PERSON NOMINATION AND CONTACT DETAILS

Each concerned RO and SDO shall designate one (1) focal person. The details shall be entered directly in the live coordination sheet through:



<https://tinyurl.com/Focal-Nomination-Form>

Cluster	Office Level	Office	Name of Focal Person	Position/ Designation	Email Address	Mobile Number
Luzon	RO	Region IV-A				
Luzon	SDO	Rizal				
Visayas	RO	Negros Island Region				
Visayas	SDO	Dumaguete City				
Mindanao	RO	Region XI				
Mindanao	SDO	Davao City				

The designated focal person shall be authorized to coordinate on behalf of the office, attend the meetings, consolidate local submissions, and promptly communicate changes or concerns to GASS.

ANNEX 3. INDICATIVE PARTICIPANTS AND RESPONDENT SELECTION CRITERIA

A. Program Management Team and Field-Office Participants

Office/Group	Composition	Number per Cluster
GASS-Policy Review and Development Division (GASS-PRDD)	Four to six (4-6) members assigned to the cluster team	4-6
GASS-Operations and Monitoring Division (GASS-ODMD)	Two (2) representatives	2
SFC	Five (5) indicative members	5
ROs	• GAS Focal Person • Quality Assurance Division representative • Policy, Planning, and Research Division representative	3
SDOs	• School Governance and Operations Division Chief • Senior Education Program Specialist for Research • Senior Education Program Specialist for School Management Monitoring and Evaluation	3
Host School	• School Head • Registrar • E-GASTPE Coordinator • School Administrator	4
ESTIMATED TOTAL		23

To maintain office operations, GASS-PRDD members will be divided into cluster teams. Each cluster will have a six- to eight-member GASS team, five indicative SFC members, and ten representatives from the concerned RO, SDO, and host school.

B. Expected FGD Respondents per SDO

The four (4) respondent groups will be applied consistently across the three SDOs. Each group will have ten (10) respondents per site, equivalent to forty (40) respondents per SDO and an overall indicative total of 120 respondents.

Group	Selection Criteria	Rizal	Dumaguete City	Davao City	Total
Group A: E-GASTPE Beneficiaries	Five parents of ESC grantees and five parents of SHS VP beneficiaries	10	10	10	30

Group	Selection Criteria	Rizal	Dumaguete City	Davao City	Total
Group B: E-GASTPE Non-Beneficiaries	Five parents of learners from congested public elementary schools and five parents of learners from congested public junior high schools	10	10	10	30
Group C: Private Schools	Five administrators of ESC-participating private schools and five administrators of SHS VP-participating private schools	10	10	10	30
Group D: Public Schools	Five administrators of congested public elementary schools and five administrators of congested public junior/senior high schools	10	10	10	30
TOTAL		40	40	40	120

ANNEX 4. COORDINATION AND PARTICIPANT-MAPPING PROCEDURES

1. **Focal-Person Designation:** ROs and SDOs nominate one focal person each and submit the required details through Annex 2 or the live coordination sheet.
2. **Initial Coordination Meeting:** GASS and SFC orient focal persons on the study purpose, fieldwork schedules, respondent criteria, host-school requirements, roles, and submission timelines.
3. **Host-School Confirmation:** The concerned SDO confirms the availability and readiness of the designated host school and identifies nearby participating schools.
4. **Participant Mapping and Validation:** The SDO and participating schools nominate respondents, verify eligibility, and identify alternates when necessary.
5. **Distribution of Participant Documents:** Participating schools provide the appropriate invitation letter, activity briefer, and informed-consent form to confirmed respondents.
6. **Pre-FGD Coordination Meeting:** The concerned offices and schools confirm the final respondent list, venue, program, travel arrangements, materials, and onsite requirements.
7. **Fieldwork and Daily Debriefing:** GASS and SFC conduct and document the FGDs, while the field offices and schools support attendance and onsite arrangements.
8. **Post-Cluster Consolidation:** GASS and SFC consolidate notes, check documentary completeness, and conduct the initial cross-group and cross-site review.

A. Participant-Mapping Fields for the Live Coordination Sheet

Required Field	Description
Cluster and SDO	• Luzon/Rizal • Visayas/Dumaguete City • Mindanao/Davao City
Respondent Group	Group A, B, C, or D
Name of Respondent	Complete name for invitation and confirmation purposes
School and Position/Relationship	School name and position, or relationship to the learner
Eligibility Basis	Applicable criterion under Annex 3
Contact Details	Mobile number and email address, when available
Confirmation Status	Confirmed, pending, alternate, or unavailable
Document Status	Invitation sent and consent form received

ANNEX 5. VENUE, LOGISTICAL, AND FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS

A. Minimum Host-School Readiness Requirements

- At least two (2) functional and sufficiently private discussion rooms;
- One (1) larger room or venue to accommodate the plenary sessions, registration, and waiting area;
- Functional comfort rooms (CRs) that are accessible to all participants
- One (1) readily available first aid/medical kit and the presence or on-call availability of a medical officer or designated health personnel to address any medical emergencies during the activity.
- Tables, chairs, electrical outlets, and adequate ventilation;
- Basic audio and presentation equipment, when available;
- On-site focal person and support personnel;
- Directional signs and participant assistance; and
- Secure space for research materials and records.

B. Responsibility Matrix

Requirement	Responsible Office/Group
Overall research coordination and field implementation	GASS with SFC
Research instruments and facilitation plan	SFC with technical review by GASS
Host-school confirmation and local coordination	Concerned SDO
Venue and onsite logistical support	Host School
Participant identification and validation	Concerned SDOs and participating schools
Distribution and collection of participant documents	Concerned SDOs and participating schools
Conduct and documentation of parallel FGDs	GASS and SFC
Post-session debriefing and consolidation	GASS and SFC, with concerned ROs and SDOs

C. Financial Arrangements

Transportation and other daily travel expenses of participating RO, SDO, host-school, and school personnel shall be charged against their respective local funds, subject to fund availability and existing government accounting, budgeting, auditing rules, and regulations.

Participating schools shall be responsible for arranging and facilitating the transportation of participating parents from their respective schools to the designated host school and back, as necessary.

Meals and refreshments for participants and members of the Program Management Team during the FGDs shall be charged against the appropriate FY 2026 Current ESC Fund, subject to existing government accounting, budgeting, auditing rules, and regulations.

ANNEX 6. RESOURCE FILES AND LIVE LINKS

Instructions: For **Resource File 1**, directly encode the required information in the live coordination sheet. For **Resource Files 2–4**, download a copy first before accomplishing or editing them; **STRICTLY** do not modify the original files.

Resource File	Link	QR Code
1. Live focal-person and participant coordination sheet	<u>https://tinyurl.com/Focal-Nomination-Form</u>	
2. Microsoft Teams link - Initial Coordination Meeting	<u>https://tinyurl.com/FGD-Initial-Meeting</u>	
3. Participant invitation letters and activity briefers	<u>https://tinyurl.com/Invitation-and-Briefer</u>	
4. Consent and confirmation forms	<u>https://tinyurl.com/Consent-and-Confirmation-Form</u>	
5. Indicative Itinerary	<u>https://tinyurl.com/Indicative-Itinerary</u>	
6. Consolidated activity files	<u>https://tinyurl.com/Consolidated-FGD-Files</u>	

ANNEX 7. SAMPLE INVITATION LETTERS AND ACTIVITY BRIEFER

A. Sample Invitation Letter to Parent-Respondents

[INSERT DATE]

Mr./Ms. [INSERT FULL NAME]

[INSERT ADDRESS OR SCHOOL, IF APPLICABLE]

Dear Mr./Ms. [INSERT SURNAME]:

Greetings!

The Department of Education, through the Government Assistance and Subsidies Service, in partnership with the Student First Coalition, will conduct clustered focus group discussions for the Baseline Study on Learner and Parent Decision-Making in Congested Public Schools.

In this regard, you are invited to participate in a focus group discussion on [INSERT DATE AND TIME] at [INSERT HOST SCHOOL/VENUE]. The discussion will gather parents' experiences and perspectives on school choice, participation or non-participation in the Educational Service Contracting Program and Senior High School Voucher Program, education-related costs, accessibility, school quality, learner adjustment, and other considerations.

Participation is voluntary, and the session is expected to last approximately 90 to 150 minutes. The attached activity briefier and informed-consent form provide further details. To confirm your participation, please sign and return the form to [INSERT SCHOOL FOCAL PERSON].

For questions, please contact the [INSERT CONTACT NAME, OFFICE, EMAIL AND NUMBER OF HOST SCHOOL].

Thank you.

[SIGNATURE OVER PRINTED NAME OF SCHOOL HEAD]

[Insert designation]

[School]

B. Sample Invitation Letter to School Administrators

[INSERT DATE]

[INSERT NAME]

[INSERT POSITION]

[INSERT SCHOOL]

Dear [INSERT TITLE AND SURNAME]:

Greetings!

The Department of Education, through the Government Assistance and Subsidies Service, in partnership with the Student First Coalition, will conduct clustered focus group discussions for the Baseline Study on Learner and Parent Decision-Making in Congested Public Schools.

You are invited to participate in a focus group discussion on [INSERT DATE AND TIME] at [INSERT HOST SCHOOL/VENUE]. The discussion will gather school-level insights on program implementation, learner transition, school choice, coordination, school capacity, and public-school decongestion.

Participation is voluntary, and the session is expected to last approximately 90 to 150 minutes. Please review and sign the attached informed-consent and confirmation form and submit it to [INSERT SDO/SCHOOL FOCAL PERSON].

For questions, please contact the [INSERT OFFICE, EMAIL AND NUMBER OF SDO].

Thank you.

[SIGNATURE OVER PRINTED NAME OF SDO OFFICIAL]

[Insert designation]

[Schools Division Office]

C. Activity Briefer

CLUSTERED FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS FOR THE BASELINE STUDY ON LEARNER AND PARENT DECISION-MAKING IN CONGESTED PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Introduction

The Department of Education, through GASS, in partnership with SFC, is conducting a baseline study to understand the factors that influence families' school-choice decisions and their participation or non-participation in the ESC Program and SHS VP. The FGDs will also gather the perspectives of participating in private schools and congested public schools.

What Participants Will Discuss

Respondent Group	Indicative Discussion Areas
Group A: Parents/Guardians of E-GASTPE Beneficiaries	Reasons for participating; experience with the application and enrolment process; subsidy and other costs; school selection; learner adjustment; program benefits and recommendations.
Group B: Parents/Guardians of E-GASTPE Non-Beneficiaries	Reasons for remaining in public schools; awareness of E-GASTPE; financial, distance, accessibility, school-quality, safety, and social considerations; conditions that may encourage transfer.
Group C: Private Schools	Program participation; beneficiary recruitment; school capacity; learner transition and support; coordination with public schools and DepEd; implementation concerns and recommendations.
Group D: Public Schools	Manifestations and effects of congestion; parent decisions; learner transfer and return; coordination with private schools; program contribution to decongestion and recommendations.

Duration and Recording

Each session will generally last 90 to 150 minutes. With participants' consent, the discussion will be audio-recorded and supported by field notes for accurate documentation and analysis.

Voluntary Participation and Rights

Participation is voluntary. Participants may decline any question or withdraw at any time without penalty or loss of benefits.

Confidentiality and Data Use

Names and identifiers will be excluded from reports, quotations will be anonymized, and records will be securely accessed only by authorized researchers.

Possible Risks and Benefits

Some questions may cause minor discomfort. Participants may decline to answer, and while there is no direct benefit, the findings may help improve education assistance and decongestion efforts.

Contact Details

GASS-Policy Review and Development Division | gass.prdd@deped.gov.ph | 0960-672-3086

DO NOT DISSEMINATE OR RESPOND UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE. THIS DRAFT IS STILL BEING FINALIZED.

ANNEX 8. INFORMED CONSENT AND PARTICIPATION CONFIRMATION FORM

Activity: Clustered Focus Group Discussions for the Baseline Study on Learner and Parent Decision-Making in Congested Public Schools

I, _____, acknowledge that I have read or have been informed of the purpose, procedures, expected duration, possible risks and benefits, confidentiality measures, and voluntary nature of the activity.

I understand that I may decline any question or withdraw at any time without penalty. I understand that my name and direct identifiers will not be included in analytical reports and that my responses may be quoted only in anonymized form.

Please check the applicable boxes:

- ☐ I voluntarily agree to participate in the focus group discussion.
- ☐ I consent to the audio recording of the discussion for research documentation and analysis.
- ☐ I consent to being included in group photographs for activity documentation. This is optional and separate from participation.

Participant Information	Details
Full Name	
Respondent Group	Group A / Group B / Group C / Group D
School/Office, if applicable	
Mobile Number	
Email Address	
Activity Date and Venue	
Signature	
Date Signed	

The completed form shall be submitted to the designated SDO or participating-school focal person before or upon registration.